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Media Release

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Former foster parent sentenced to 20 years for child exploitation

Wilmington – The Delaware Child Predator Task Force announced today that Steven Hughes, age 52, of Newark was sentenced this morning by Superior Court Judge Richard R. Cooch to 20 years in prison on child exploitation charges. Hughes is a former foster parent who operated a photography studio specializing in the photography of young children and also billed himself as a “Santa Claus” who would conduct home visits.

“People who create, possess, and distribute child pornography are predators,” Biden stated. “The Delaware Child Predator Task Force will track them down, prosecute them and put them behind bars.”

Hughes was arrested in Millsboro on October 22, 2009 and was indicted on November 9, 2009 on multiple counts of Sexual Exploitation of a Child and Dealing in Child Pornography. The indictment alleges that Hughes possessed 18 images of a 6 year-old female exposing her genitalia in sexually explicit poses and numerous other images of toddler-age females forced into sex acts with adult men. Hughes was charged with distributing these images by publishing them online to any interested party, including undercover law enforcement agents involved in the investigation. In total, the ongoing investigation revealed that Hughes maintained over 15,000 images of child exploitation, hundreds of which he created himself. He pled guilty to 5 counts of Sexual Exploitation of a Child on April 15, 2010.

This case was the direct result of a proactive child predator investigation initiated by the New Castle County Police Department and conducted jointly with the Delaware Child Predator Task Force, which Biden established in 2007, where prosecutors and investigators work side-by-side with Delaware State Police and other agencies to do nothing but investigate crimes against children. This collaborative effort targets, investigates, and prosecutes online sexual predators that may otherwise evade detection.

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